ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Disclosed is a policy based method for blocking the automatic dereferencing of web beacon links in an e-mail message sent in HTML format with a minimum sacrifice in the HTML body rendering quality. HTML content that potentially contains web beacons is replaced with non-dereferencing elements prior to HTML rendering by the e-mail browser so that the remaining HTML can be rendered as complete as possible without rendering the potential web beacons. Additionally, the present invention also provides a method for removing the HTTP Referer header from referenced external links and activated images. An HTTP redirector service is implemented as a server-based link redirection evaluator application which serves to eliminate the Referer header for the URL requested. Embodiments of the present invention provide for blocking web beacons and removing HTTP Referer headers in both a "down-level" e-mail client and a client which can make programmatic use of an HTML rendering engine.